



## **Senator Heitkamp's Work to Keep North Dakota's Communities Strong and Safe**

Through her Strong & Safe Communities Initiative, launched in 2014, Senator Heitkamp has taken a comprehensive approach to address the emerging challenges North Dakota faces as the state has experienced rapid population growth and development. Below are some of the actions she has taken to keep North Dakota's communities strong and safe:

### **Transportation of Crude Oil by Rail**

Since the crude oil train derailment in Casselton in December 2013, Senator Heitkamp has pushed for improvements to rail safety to protect North Dakota's communities. Largely due to the energy boom in North Dakota and the then heavy reliance on rail as a mode of transportation, as of mid-2014, the number of railcars carrying crude oil grew by more than 4,000 percent between 2008 and 2013. To improve safety for North Dakota's communities, Senator Heitkamp introduced her [RESPONSE Act](#) to help make sure first responders have the training and resources they need to handle potential hazardous incidents, such as derailments of trains carrying crude oil. Her bill was signed into law in 2016. She also brought the fire chief from Casselton to Washington, D.C. where he [testified at a hearing](#) that Senator Heitkamp chaired in the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security to discuss his team's experience responding to the Casselton derailment. Senator Heitkamp also [pressed federal agencies](#) to release updated rules to help prevent future derailments, many of which have been finalized.

Senator Heitkamp also brought the then-second in command at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to North Dakota to meet with volunteer firefighters about finding solutions to training and recruitment issues related to volunteer firefighters, which make up 96 percent of the state's first responders. She also helped [secure federal funds](#) for a one-of-a-kind rail safety training facility in Colorado which many North Dakota first responders have visited for training sessions.

### **Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence**

Since the fall of 2013, Senator Heitkamp has been a leader in Congress working to combat human trafficking -- a growing problem in North Dakota -- by holding Senate hearings, introducing legislation, setting up training sessions for North Dakotans on identifying human trafficking, and coordinating with lead advocacy organizations to raise awareness about this problem. Her [bipartisan bill](#) to crack down on websites like Backpage.com that knowingly facilitate human trafficking became law in 2018. She played a key role in passing [bipartisan](#)

[legislation](#) through Congress which included her [safe harbor bill](#) with U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar to make sure human trafficking victims who are minors aren't treated as criminals. She is continuing to push for [bipartisan legislation](#) to prevent runaway and homeless youth from getting caught in human trafficking rings. Senator Heitkamp also [introduced a bipartisan bill](#) to give health care providers -- including doctors, nurses, and social workers -- training to help identify and protect victims of human trafficking. Senator Heitkamp [brought Cindy McCain](#) -- a national and global leader in the fight against human trafficking -- to North Dakota to discuss with leaders best practices to help eradicate human trafficking from the state.

Senator Heitkamp's efforts to stop human trafficking build on her work as North Dakota's Attorney General to combat domestic violence as she implemented the initial Violence Against Women Act at a state level, and [helped pass the reauthorization](#) of the law right when she joined the Senate. In September 2018, Senator Heitkamp's [bipartisan bill](#) was signed into law to help further combat domestic abuse and sexual violence by promoting pro-bono legal services for victims of these crimes.

### **Crime and Drug Crime**

Senator Heitkamp has pushed for strong action to help reduce the rise of crime and drug crime in North Dakota, particularly in the oil patch. She brought the [then-White House Drug Czar](#) to the state in 2013 during which he pledged to dedicate federal resources to address crime and drug crime in western North Dakota. He followed up with more support for the area -- including making [Williams County eligible](#) for more federal funds to help rein in drug abuse and crime. Senator Heitkamp then brought the [next Drug Czar](#) to North Dakota where he committed to continuing to address the growing drug problems in the state, with a particular focus on stopping drug crime in the Bakken. [Bipartisan legislation](#) Senator Heitkamp pushed for to combat transnational drug trafficking -- a growing problem in North Dakota -- passed unanimously in the U.S. Senate. Senator Heitkamp also sought to expand access to drug take-back sites to stop the growing problem of prescription drug abuse in North Dakota. She also [pushed for the FBI](#) to open a permanent office in Williston -- with the FBI answering those calls and opening a permanent office there in 2016.

### **Opioid and Substance Abuse and Addiction**

Since fighting North Dakota's methamphetamine crisis as the state's attorney general in the 1990s, Senator Heitkamp has been working to stem the tide of addiction, abuse, and illegal drug trafficking in the state's rural communities. She has held [numerous community meetings](#) across the state to discuss the federal support towns need to recover from and prevent addiction to opioids and substances, and talk about how to help communities combat this drug abuse epidemic. At the federal level, Senator Heitkamp has been working to address this issue by passing legislation to combat opioid abuse and helping introduce a bill called the [LifeBOAT Act](#) to provide more federal resources to address the epidemic. She also [introduced a bill](#) to expand a critical federal grant program to provide \$12 billion over five years for local organizations to treat drug abuse and addiction while preventing further overdoses. She helped [pass legislation](#) in 2016, which became law, that offers community-based prevention and treatment resources to combat opioid abuse. Congress is soon expected to pass [bipartisan,](#)

[comprehensive legislation](#) to combat opioid and other substance abuse, which includes Senator Heitkamp's provisions to address the ripple effects of the overdose epidemic on children, families, and communities.

### **Border Security**

As a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Senator Heitkamp is working to improve conditions and security at the Northern Border as border crossings have been impacted by the state's population boom. North Dakota has 17 border crossings, many of which are in small and rural areas. In 2015, Senator Heitkamp [brought the then-number two leader](#) at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to North Dakota's Northern Border to see firsthand the challenges border security personnel there face and discuss ways to improve the safety of North Dakota communities. She introduced a [bipartisan bill](#), which became law in 2016, to make sure the federal government assesses threats along the Northern Border. In June 2018, DHS released its new [Northern Border Strategy](#), a plan prompted by Senator Heitkamp's bill. Senator Heitkamp also helped the then-White House Drug Czar announce his [national strategy](#) to fight drug crime in the Bakken and at the Northern Border which she specifically pushed for. And she held discussions with law enforcement in Grand Forks, Pembina, Portal and Minot about challenges at the border.

### **Indian Country Challenges**

With the tremendous growth throughout North Dakota, many of the state's Indian reservations -- particularly MHA Nation which sits over part of the oil patch -- have faced unique issues and Senator Heitkamp has been working to improve safety on them. She has pushed for a [permanent federal law enforcement](#) presence in Indian Country to combat the increase of drugs, crime, and human trafficking -- including pressing the head of the FBI on the issue during a U.S. Senate hearing, and through multiple conversations with the current and former U.S. Attorneys General. These efforts continued her work since she served as North Dakota's Attorney General.

The [first bill](#) Senator Heitkamp introduced as a U.S. senator -- which was signed into law in 2016 -- created a Commission on Native Children to address the major economic, social, justice, health, and educational disparities experienced by Native American children. It will also offer sustainable solutions to significantly improve outcomes. Additionally, she [introduced comprehensive legislation](#) to address and mitigate the detrimental impact exposure to trauma can have on children and families -- particularly those in Native communities -- as they grow and develop.

Senator Heitkamp has also worked to improve Indian housing to make it safer. After bringing the then-U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary to Turtle Mountain in 2014 to show him the housing challenges in Indian Country, he came back to North Dakota to [host an in-depth summit](#) on improving tribal housing issues, which Senator Heitkamp encouraged HUD to do. And to help promote economic development in Indian Country, Senator Heitkamp [brought the then-head of the U.S. Small Business Administration](#) in 2015, to Standing

Rock where they announced new training, resources, and support for Native American small businesses and entrepreneurs.

### **Epidemic of Missing and Murdered Native American Women**

Senator Heitkamp is also focused on the crisis of violence against Native American women and children, including getting caught in human trafficking rings. She has sought more resources to help them get out of these terrible situations. In September 2013, she brought witnesses to a U.S. Senate hearing she called for, during which they testified specifically about these problems. In 2017, Senator Heitkamp [introduced Savanna's Act](#) to make sure North Dakota's tribes have the information and resources they need to protect women and girls from violence, abduction, and human trafficking. In April 2018, [her bipartisan bill](#) to expand AMBER Alerts, the child abduction warnings, in Indian Country was signed into law. Heitkamp also [started #NotInvisible](#), a social media campaign to raise awareness about the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women.

### **Mental Health and Suicide Crisis**

Senator Heitkamp has worked to address the alarming rate of death by suicide in North Dakota, focus on the increase in mental health challenges in the state, and sought to end the stigma associated with mental health issues. She hosted her [Summit to Stop Suicide](#), which brought together over 100 North Dakota community leaders from across the state to discuss how to improve North Dakota's efforts to prevent deaths by suicide. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of death by suicide jumped by 58 percent in North Dakota between 1999 and 2016— the largest statewide increase in the country. In June, Senator Heitkamp successfully worked to include in the bipartisan 2018 Senate Farm Bill [a provision](#) to help farmers and ranchers in crisis, including preventing suicide. Senator Heitkamp [introduced legislation](#) and helped secure funds to support family caretakers of vulnerable children, including children who lost their parents to suicide or opioid abuse. She has also sought more access to mental health services across the state and helped introduce legislation to address the increase in mental health challenges in North Dakota by bolstering state and local programs.

### **Economic Development and Community Impact**

As North Dakota's population rapidly grows, the state has experienced serious strains on much of its transportation, housing, and infrastructure which Senator Heitkamp is working to address so communities remain strong. She is continuing to push for Congress to pass a long-term transportation bill to help North Dakota build and expand roads and bridges across the state to improve safety and keep up with the increase of traffic on the roads. She has also fought to expand water systems to provide clean water and pushed for more affordable housing to help alleviate the state's housing crisis.

### **Rural Economic Challenges**

Rural communities, especially farm communities, currently face unique economic challenges. When Senator Heitkamp first joined the U.S. Senate, she helped write, negotiate, and pass a bipartisan Farm Bill that provided certainty for North Dakota farmers and ranchers and made

smart investments in research and young farmers. And right after that bill passed, she immediately got to work on the next Farm Bill by meeting with farmers across the state to get their feedback and make sure their voices were heard in the next bill. She helped pass the most recent [bipartisan Senate Farm Bill](#) – which passed with a historic level of bipartisan support – and she now serves on the conference committee tasked with reaching a deal between the Senate and House Farm Bills.

Senator Heitkamp has also been a vocal advocate for smart trade policies to support the state's farmers and ranchers. She believes bad actors like China that cheat on trade must be dealt with by strengthening partnerships with our allies and enforcing trade laws to create a level playing field for American farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers. She has pushed back on the administration's trade policies and sought ways to stand up for North Dakota's producers by introducing legislation to [rein in tariffs](#), help farmers and ranchers [recover losses](#) they face because of the administration's trade war, and [direct funds](#) the government is collecting from tariffs on imported goods toward trade promotion assistance. She has also been meeting with top administration officials as well as the ambassadors to Mexico and Canada.

### **Rural Health Care**

Senator Heitkamp has worked to improve access to health care for rural communities in North Dakota and across the country where residents often have to travel far distances to get needed health services. She is co-chair of the bipartisan Senate Rural Health Caucus. She successfully pushed to create the [Rural Health Council](#) within the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services that will put greater emphasis on rural health care when federal rules are written. Senator Heitkamp introduced [bipartisan legislation](#) to strengthen rural health care delivery systems and improve access to high quality services for individuals living in rural and underserved areas, which passed in a Senate committee in February. She introduced another [bipartisan bill](#) to incentivize medical professionals to serve in high-need, rural areas and make commonsense regulatory changes that recognize the reality on the ground in rural health care delivery. In 2016, Senator Heitkamp [unveiled a series of bills](#) that would make sure the federal government is listening closely to the needs and challenges of rural communities in North Dakota and across the country when accessing critical resources like health care.

### **Affordable Housing**

Senator Heitkamp worked closely with a bipartisan group of senators to [introduce strong, comprehensive legislation](#) to reform America's broken housing finance system. Their bill would protect taxpayers from future economic downturns while responsibly preserving the availability of the 30-year fixed-rate mortgage for homebuyers. She drafted provisions in the reform legislation to support rural and Native American communities. Senator Heitkamp also worked with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to see that [new Fair Market Rents](#) were increased to appropriate levels for areas of North Dakota where rents have quickly soared and families need assistance to afford housing. Fair Market Rents help low-income households reduce the share of their income that goes to rent. She has also been a vocal advocate in the fight against homelessness, particularly among youth in rural or tribal communities. She [reintroduced a bipartisan bill](#) to combat youth homelessness and trafficking

that would continue funding for grants to communities across the nation to prevent and respond to youth and young adult homelessness.

### **21st Century Security Challenges**

Senator Heitkamp is also working to protect North Dakotans from cybersecurity threats. In 2015, she supported [comprehensive legislation](#) to enhance information sharing between the federal government and the private sector. The bill included an amendment Senator Heitkamp wrote to help protect emergency response networks from cyberattacks. Through hearings and meetings in North Dakota, Senator Heitkamp has also been a [strong advocate for cyber hygiene](#) and making sure individuals and families are equipped with the knowledge they need to navigate the web safely and securely. As more North Dakotans have come to rely on the internet for daily tasks, the need for increased connectivity and speeds are also evident. Nearly 16 percent of North Dakota lacks access to high-speed internet. For folks living on North Dakota's tribal lands, that lack of access has historically been a significant setback. As a founding member of the U.S. Senate Broadband Caucus, Senator Heitkamp has been pushing for bipartisan solutions that will connect every North Dakota family, business, and school to high-speed internet. She has [pressed top federal agency officials](#) about the need to improve access to high-speed internet, particularly in Indian Country.

### **Economic Diversity**

As North Dakota has grown, its economy has also shifted. While it's still a commodity driven state, the number of new businesses and startups across the state has drastically grown. Small businesses represent 99 percent of all employers in North Dakota. Senator Heitkamp has used her roles on the Senate Small Business Committee and Senate Banking Committee to boost rural businesses and workers. She introduced her bill, the [SEED Act](#), to address challenges facing startups in North Dakota, as well as other rural states, by helping them get the early stage funding they need to grow their businesses. Senator Heitkamp helped reintroduce the [FAMILY Act](#), which would create a federal paid family and medical leave policy. The bill would support working families and boost the ability of small businesses to support and retain employees. Her [bipartisan bill](#) became law in May which will encourage investments in small businesses and startups in smaller communities. And she had a separate [bipartisan bill](#) that also became law which will make sure small businesses and startups have a seat at the table when new federal rules are written on how they can raise funding and access the resources they need to succeed. In June, Senator Heitkamp [hailed the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling](#) that states have the ability to require online retailers to collect sales tax, an issue she has been fighting for since 1992 when she served as North Dakota's tax commissioner and her case was brought before the Supreme Court. Senator Heitkamp led two amicus briefs to the Court this year urging the Court to take up the case. Senator Heitkamp led a bipartisan legislative effort to settle the issue of online retailers gaining an unfair advantage over brick-and-mortar businesses by not having to collect state sales and use taxes.